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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy involving students in small group learning activities that promote positive interaction. Research studies have consistently found that cooperative learning promotes increased academic achievement and involves relative use of implementation and reasonable costs. Improved behavior, increased positive attitudes towards the class, and better attendance are also benefits of cooperative learning strategies. Cooperative learning techniques that have been identified by researchers include Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), Jigsaw, Learning Together, and Group Investigation. Ten basic steps for successful implementation have been identified. Cooperative learning is of particular interest for social studies teachers, because it promotes student motivation and encourages group processes and positive social and academic interaction among students. The sample cooperative learning lesson, "Creating a Classroom Bill of Rights," is provided for elementary students in the fourth through sixth grades. The lesson "The United States Constitution: Powers of Congress," is included for grades 7-12. (SM)

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING: EXPERIENCING THE CONSTITUTION IN ACTION

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING:
Experiencing the Constitution in Action

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy involving students in small group learning activities that promote positive interaction. Cooperative learning is one of the most thoroughly researched strategies available to educators. Studies have consistently found that cooperative learning promotes increased academic achievement and involves relative ease of implementation and reasonable costs. Improved behavior, increased liking of class, and better attendance are also benefits of cooperative learning strategies. (Slavin, 1987)

Cooperative learning should be of particular interest to social studies teachers because, in addition to the highly desired outcomes described, cooperative learning promotes student motivation, encourages group processes and positive social and academic interaction among students, and rewards successful group participation.

According to Glasser (1986), students' motivation to work in school is dependent on the extent to which students' basic psychological needs are met. Cooperative learning increases student motivation by providing peer support for students. Students, as part of a learning team, can achieve success by working successfully with others. Students are also encouraged to learn material in greater depth and to think of creative ways to convince the teacher they have mastered required material.

Cooperative learning helps students at every academic level to feel successful and productive in class. In cooperative learning teams, low achieving students can make contributions to a group and experience success, while all students can increase their understanding of ideas by explaining them to others. (Harvard, 1986)

Components of the cooperative learning process as described by Johnson and Johnson (1984) are complimentary to the goals of social studies instruction. For example, well constructed cooperative learning tasks involve positive interdependence on others and individual accountability. To work successfully in a cooperative learning team, however, students must also master interpersonal skills needed for the group to successfully accomplish its task.

Further, positive outcomes from cooperative learning have been noted on relationships between students from different ethnic backgrounds. Slavin (1980) notes: "Cooperative learning methods embody the requirements of cooperative, equal status interaction between students of different ethnic backgrounds sanctioned by the school."

Traditional classroom teaching has stressed competition and individual learning for the majority of learning activities. When students are given cooperative tasks, however, learning is assessed individually, and rewards are given to the group on the basis of the group's performance, advantages of cooperative learning strategies seen most clearly. (Harvard, 1986)

Cooperative learning techniques which have been identified by researchers include STAD, TGT, Jigsaw, Learning Together, and Group Investigation. STAD is perhaps the easiest of these strategies to implement since content can be presented in the way the teacher has traditionally presented the lesson and individual assessment can utilize the same criteria and method the teacher has traditionally used. After the lesson has been presented, student teams work on assignments cooperatively to master material. In studies conducted by Newmann and Thompson (1987), STAD is the most successful of the cooperative learning techniques studied when compared with traditional teaching methods, providing a higher percentage of academic success in 89 per cent of the studies noted by the authors.

TGT, short for Teams-Games-Tournaments, is similar to the STAD strategy. After working with team members to learn material, students compete with others of like achievement to earn points for their team. Individual assessment is then conducted.

Learning Together is a process defined by Johnson and Johnson (1984). Students are given cooperative tasks which create positive interdependence and encourage group interaction. Rewards are given for bother individual and group performance.

Group investigation requires students to work together to complete tasks by deciding what information is needed, how the information will be organized, and how the information will be presented. In organizing the tasks and facilitating the group work, teachers encourage application, synthesis, and inference.

Jigsaw is the least successful of the techniques studied by Newmann and Thompson. In Jigsaw, each team member studies a part of a topic or concept, meets with a group of students who have studied the same material, and teaches their topic to their group. Individuals must rely on team members for part of the information needed to do well on the individual test.

While each of the strategies described are different, Foyle and Lyman (1988) identify the basic steps involved in successful implementation of the technique:

1. The content to be taught is identified and criteria for mastery is determined by the teacher.

2. The cooperative learning technique that would be most useful for the specific objective is identified and the group size is determined by the teacher.

3. Students are assigned to groups. Heterogeneous learning groups have the most potential for success in cooperative learning as student differences make the groups work.

4. The classroom is arranged to facilitate group interaction.

5. Group processes are taught or reviewed as needed to assure that the groups run smoothly.

6. The teacher makes the expectations for the learning clear and makes sure students understand the purpose of the learning that will take place in the groups. A time line for activities is made clear to the students.

7. The teacher presents initial material as appropriate using whatever techniques (s)he chooses.

8. The teacher monitors student interaction in the groups as the students work on their tasks and provides assistance and clarification as needed. The teacher reviews group skills and facilitates problem solving as needed.

9. Student outcomes are evaluated. Students must individually demonstrate their mastery of the important skills or concepts of the learning. The students may be encouraged to think of creative or unusual ways to demonstrate that they have learned.

10. Groups are rewarded for their success. Teacher verbal praise, class newsletter, or bulletin board recognition are possible ways to reward high achieving groups.

Glasser (1986) notes: "We will not improve our schools unless we try to offer what we want to teach in a recognizably different form from the way we are presently teaching." By encouraging positive student interaction and building group skills, social studies teachers can model the ideals of their disciplines while increasing the academic success and self-esteem of their students.

SAMPLE COOPERATIVE LESSON: ELEMENTARY

Topic: Creating a Classroom Bill of Rights

Level: Fourth to Sixth Grades

Objective: Students will cooperatively develop a Bill of Rights for students in the classroom.

Group Size: Three students per heterogeneous group. Each group should contain at least one male and one female student.

Criteria for Group Success:

During group activities students will:

(1) use appropriate voice levels
(2) demonstrate good listening skills
(3) encourage other group members
(4) practice assigned roles

Evaluation of the Objective:

After the activity is completed, students' behavior toward other students will demonstrate that students value the Classroom Bill of Rights.

Students will be organized into groups of 3. Each group will contain at least one male and one female student. Each student will be assigned a role: reader, recorder, or encourager.

Explanation of roles: Reader: reads questions to group

Recorder: records group vote

Encourager: encourages each student in group to participate

Activity 1

In assigned group, students discuss the following questions. A vote is taken on each position and the majority position is recorded by the recorder. The group must give at least one reason to support each answer given.

Group Members: _____

Discuss each of the following questions. After each member of the group has given their ideas, take a group vote to decide if the group agrees or disagrees with the question. You must give at least one reason to support each answer you give.

1. Does a student in this class have the right to say something that is not true about another student?

2. Does a student in this class have a right to use profanity (swear words)?

3. Does a student in this class have a right to have others listen politely to them while they are speaking?

4. Does a student in this class have a right to express an idea that most students don't agree with?

5. How can we protect the rights we decided are important?

(While groups are working, teacher monitors groups, gives feedback and assistance as needed to help groups function more effectively.)

Activity 2

Group Members _____

Choose a different role than you had during Activity 1. Discuss each of the following questions. After each member of the group has given their ideas, take a group vote to decide if the group agrees or disagrees with the question. You must give at least one reason to support each answer you give.

1. Does a student in this class have the right to leave their feet in the aisles?

2. Does a student have the right to bring knives or other weapons to school?

3. Does a student have the right to play games where pushing, grabbing, or tripping other students takes place?

4. Does a student have the right to talk, push, or run during a safety drill?

5. How can we protect the rights we decided were important?

(While groups are working, teacher monitors groups, gives feedback and assistance as needed to help groups function more effectively.)

Activity 3

Group Members _____

Choose a different role than you had during Activity 1 and 2. Discuss each of the following questions. After each member of the group has given their ideas, take a group vote to decide if the group agrees or disagrees with the question. You must give at least one reason to support each answer you give.

1. Does a student in this class have the right to take something that belongs to another student or adult in the room?

2. Does a student have the right to copy answers from another student?

3. Does a student have the right to bully students who are smaller or weaker than himself or herself?

4. Does a student have the right to use textbooks, desks, and restrooms that are free of graffiti (marks, words, drawings that don't belong)?

5. How can we protect the rights we decided were important?

6. Are there additional rights, other than those we have discussed, which all members of our class should have? (The recorder should list any ideas the group has.)

(While groups are working, teacher monitors groups, gives feedback and assistance as needed to help groups function more effectively.)

Activitv 4

Each group reports their group vote on each of the questions in Activities 1-3. The recorder for each activity should report for the group. The teacher will record each group's vote on a tally on the chalkboard or overhead projector. Other rights which groups have thought of should also be listed.

Each student will evaluate their work in the group using the following criteria:

Self-Evaluation for _____

I worked with _____

I worked hard in my group	All of the time	Some of the time	Not much of the time
I listened to others when they were sharing ideas	All of the time	Some of the time	Not much of the time
I thought my group listened to me when I shared ideas	All of the time	Some of the time	Not much of the time
I thought my group had good ideas	All of the time	Some of the time	Not much of the time
I enjoyed working with this group	All of the time	Some of the time	Not much of the time

(Following the self-evaluation, each group member will briefly share what they said on their self-evaluation with the other members of their group.)

Follow-up Activity

The teacher will copy all ideas with which most groups agreed onto a sheet for each student labeled "Classroom Bill of Rights". All ideas should be phrased positively (example: "Students in this class have a right to . . ." rather than "Students in this class do not have a right to . . ."). Students will vote individually on the entire Bill of Rights to decide if it should be the Bill of Rights for the class. If most agree, a copy of the Bill should be displayed in the room and all students should be given an opportunity to sign the Bill.

Follow-up evaluation: Teacher will observe students and give feedback on how well they are following the Classroom Bill of Rights. It may be productive to have periodic group discussions to let students evaluate which rights are being respected and

SAMPLE COOPERATIVE LESSON: SECONDARY

Topic: The United States Constitution: Powers of Congress

Level: Seventh to Twelfth Grades

Objective:

1. Students will cooperatively identify broad interpretation and narrow interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

2. Students will cooperatively identify and explain ways in which the United States would be different if the U.S. Constitution was interpreted only in a narrow sense.

Group Size: Four students per heterogeneous group. Each group should contain at least one male and one female student.

Criteria for Group Success:

During group activities students will:

(1) be observed by the teacher for the use of proper group processing skills.
(2) be observed by a member within the group for member contributions as follows:
   a. Speaking ideas
   b. Listening to others
   c. Participating in role
   d. Helping others in the group.
(3) complete the single-sheet written task with 100% accuracy.

Evaluation of the Objective:

After the activity is completed, the teacher's observation, student's observation, and group written paper will be collected and scored.

Students will be organized into groups of 4. Each group will contain at least one male and one female student. Each student will be assigned a role: facilitator, recorder, marker, encourager.

Explanation of roles:

Facilitator:	leads the group and eases each student's involvement
Recorder:	writes the group's response to the single-sheet written task
Marker:	marks, using an observation sheet, each time a group member carries out a group task
Encourager:	encourages each student in group to participate and says positive statements about that participation

Introduction:

President George Washington sought written opinions about whether Congress could or could not establish a national bank. In 1790 Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, proposed a national bank which would expand the national economy and would be the government's financial agent. Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, felt the bank would help northern seaboard interests and not southern farmers. The issue is broad interpretation versus narrow interpretation of the Constitution.

Thomas Jefferson stated:

I believe that the foundation of the Constitution lies on this principle---that "all powers not delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states, or to the people." To take a single step beyond these specific limits to the powers of Congress, is to grasp unlimited power.

Alexander Hamilton replied:

Congress has implied as well as express powers. For the sake of accuracy, it should be mentioned that Congress also has what might be called resulting powers. For example, if the United States conquered a neighboring territory, it would have jurisdiction there. This jurisdiction would come from the whole mass of powers of the government, rather than from any of the specifically enumerated powers.

Questions:

1. According to Jefferson, why did the Constitution not give Congress the power to set up a national bank?

2. According to Hamilton, what justification was there for a broad interpretation of the Constitution?

3. By 1819, the Supreme Court decided that Congress did have the power to charter a national bank. If the narrow interpretation of the Constitution (strict constructionism) had won out and new events could not bring new interpretations of the Constitution, the United States would be different today.

List and explain at least five (5) ways the U.S. would be different.

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